1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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571 517 they received their nicknames were of other sorts. Not even farming occupied a large share of their conversation, keen as their rivalry in the matter often was while work was going on.

571 517 524 Taking these matters in order, the young men who met at Roche's house met habitually there for card playing. Roche's unmarried son, a man about thirty, was perhaps the central figure. His cousin, another Roche, was the brother of a young man just married, who took part in no *cuaird*. This cousin helped work his brother's farm. He was another central figure. The group that formed itself round them included most of the young men of Rynamona between the ages of twenty and thirty. They played the usual games of the Irish countryside, "forty-five" and "nap," often far into the night.

571 517 525 Roche's house was the more informal center. It took in the younger men. But there was present in the community a custom somewhat more organized, namely, the "gamble." As often as once a week a gamble is held in or near Rynamona. Each household, as its turn comes, throws open its doors to the card players. Admission, usually a shilling, is charged and goes toward defraying the expense of the supper of bread and tea for all and toward the prize. What is left after those charges are met belongs to the householder. Often this amount reaches a profitable figure, and, where the custom is firmly entrenched, a certain commercialism shows its head.

But the gamble is a sporting event. Teams, often formed of habitual associates in card playing, are pitted against one another in one form of the gamble. In another, individual high scorers win. The prize is usually a turkey or two geese, even a bonham (young pig), a side of bacon, or a calf. Elaborate rules and canons of honesty govern the play, the conduct of the players, and the obligation of the person offering the prize. Play is serious and intense, and the win-

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THE OLD IN THE COMMUNITY

ner of the prize can count himself a proud man, for to be known in the countryside as a "great gambler" is a coveted mark of shrewdness and skill.

The older men seldom attend the gambles. They are the province of the young. For the latter, they are a crystallization of the more informal card playing, such as that at Roche's house, already described, and they give the successful young men a prestige in the community ordinarily denied them. For in late years tournaments have sprung up covering whole sections of the county and it is a proud team which can bring back a five or ten pound district prize to its home community.

From the standpoint of an enumeration of those taking part in the gambles, too, the gambles show themselves to be such a crystallization. They bring into association on more definite occasions the groups, such as that at Roche's house, which meet habitually. They unite most of the young men, especially the more active among them, with a few of the older. But it is from the young men's world of habit that their union is created.

In Rynamona the young men who gathered nightly at Roche's house were the mainstays of the gambles. They could be counted upon to attend all of them. They played well and long, as they had learned the games among themselves. But they were not the only ones to come. Most of the slightly older men of what we shall call the intermediate *cuaird*, to be described later, such as John Quin, the newcomer to the old men's house already named, came from time to time, and there was always a sprinkling of young men, kinsfolk, and "friends" from near-by communities. It was only the members of the old men's house who stayed away. They alone had given up the habits of young men. To them the gamble was "codology."

Thus the first point of difference between the visiting habits of the old men and the young men, their lack of cen-

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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161 of social sentiments and forms of social organization shaped entirely within the familism of the small farmers. The new opportunities have appeared first and foremost as means for personal and group advancement within the existing social and familist order.

One could hazard that the census figures represent not an "economic problem" in the sense of a flight from poverty or a fight against its restrictions but the movement of a population seizing upon new opportunities and new prosperity without relinquishing at any point the already existing organization of their social sentiments and habits. In such a view the problems of population decline in Ireland are results not of poverty but of prosperity.

161 However that may be, there is a close parallel between
166 the opening of opportunities for education and for rise into
555 the professions, the ranks of business in the Irish towns, and government, all taking place since 1870, and the demography of the small farmer class. The children of the small farmers have flocked through the doors opened to them into every walk of Irish life. They continue to do so today. The towns and their occupations continue to grow and grow, but the countryside does not. The process is one by which the long delays in marriage, the restriction of children to the few who can be well provided for, and the fierce centering of family ambition in the occupational status of its members, more usually thought of as urban, petit-bourgeois phenomena, have spread outward in to the countryside and overtaken the small farmer on his farm. The mobility of a changing, democratized social order, capable of recruiting the ranks of one class from the children of another, has been combined with the fixity, the conservatism, and the rigidity of an ancient and still vital familism. It should be said that Ireland is not unique in this recombination of elements of social organization. She is unique in illustrating so well, in her special way, a social process universal in the countries of Western European civilization.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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gives advantage to the buyer rather than to themselves, they would change nothing in it. Prowess in bargaining is recognized and valued in every person. A man who is a good hand at bargaining or a good intermediary between bargainers soon makes a name for himself. The man who can drive a hard bargain gets a hearty respect from his neighbors and wins a grudging respect even from his victims, but the man who lets himself be bested wins scant sympathy. At the same time, however, sharp or unfair practice soon wins condemnation.

All this lore the child learns as he does man's work. He is taken to fairs from the age of ten or so and stands on the fair green or in the streets the long hours from dawn until the last buyer leaves. He learns from actual experience and finds his lessons reviewed again and again in the constant discussion at home and on *cuaird* of prices, buyers, famous bargains and bargainers.

At home the approach of a fair leaves no doubt as to the importance of the event. Farmers talk of prospects for days ahead. Each man is asked what he intends to try to sell, and the merits and prospects of each beast are common coin. Every man hazards his opinion as to what prices will be, how they will compare with those of recent fairs in surrounding villages, and what beasts will find the readiest market. In the light of all this discussion the ordinary farmer makes up his mind either to try his luck or wait for a better chance.

Should he decide to try his luck in the coming fair, he has a well-established procedure to follow. He gathers his stock together, gives them any special attention they may need. If the fair is a long way off, he drives his bullocks and heifers halfway there the day before and puts them overnight in the field of a "friend" along the road. In this he has the aid of a boy or a "friend," after the pattern of kinship reciprocities.

On the day of the fair he is up as early as one or two in the

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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243 789 is worth noticing that symbols in the form of a swastika, but including also circles, pentagrams and horses, were formerly cut as protective devices in the beams of barns in Scandinavia. Some of the designs are reminiscent of the art of the Bronze Age.

243 An Irish verse giving the four essentials of a good thrashing, collected in Co. Armagh, runs in translation:

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A hand-staff of holly,
A souple of hazel,
A single sheaf,
And a clean floor.

This is where the besom of heather or bent comes in: it is still preferred to the sweeping-broom for a clay floor or to get into the joins of boards or cobbles. Thrashing was a daily job, carried out on well-run farms night and morning before the cattle were fed. It was held that the cattle throve best on freshly thrashed oats, and the storage of grain would anyhow have been difficult where there were no barns.[1] For this reason, too, the level 'street' in front of the house, or even the public road was often the most suitable floor available. The thrashing was usually done on a strong linen sheet. Publicity as well as a steady echoing beat seem to have been the desired aims. Everywhere prestige has attached to a noisy thrashing, and partly no doubt for self-aggrandisement a solitary thrasher would beat with his feet to make the noise of two. Everywhere too the sound of the flail has been turned into jingles and rustic rhymes. They did not accompany the work itself because it was too noisy and too exhausting to allow talking or singing. The flails' beaters made their own merry music; was it, one wonders, originally intended to drive away evil spirits from the precious food supply?

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222 824 In this chapter we have confined ourselves to some of the things that were made at home out of materials that lay to hand. To describe the utilization of all the lesser plants that have

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[1]Mr. A. T. Lucas, however, has described traditional outdoor granaries, now restricted to west Cork, constructed of thick straw ropes, which when completed resemble round stacks (*Gwerin*, I (1956), 2–20). Mr. V. B. Proudfoot calls my attention to the similar 'corn bykes' of Caithness (*P.S.A.S.* (1952), 156–7).

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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tunity to create additional capital; they are content to rest on their psychological
[157] laurels, are limited in their aspirations, and are indolent. They betray a smugness
[124] of attitude much resented by their less prestigeful fellows. A woman spoke contemptuously of the "great estates" boasted of by these men, when she discussed with me the many land disputes that she had witnessed during her lifetime.

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423 When one asks the folk to rank prestige symbols and the positions of individuals in the status hierarchy, the only consensus which emerges is the placing of land and capital at the apex of the rank order of symbols, the assigning of men who possess these in greatest quantity to the top of the hierarchy, and the placing of landless men at the bottom. Least prestigeful among the landless are those who are descendants of fisherfolk, most of whose families were recent migrants to Inis Beag. An example of the verbal abuse to which they are subjected is a remark made to one of them by the king in a heated argument, who said, "Why don't you spend your time gathering periwinkles like your father?"; the man replied with equal venom, "Who was your father, a king?" Other prestige symbols delineated by the folk, although not mentioned by all and variously ranked, are advanced education, prestigeful kin abroad, economic skills, and singing, dancing, and storytelling abilities. Strength and courage occasionally are cited, but they [178] are considered symbols of a past era (which nativism and primitivism make difficult to assess) and have come to lose much of their significance.

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[123] Only one family in the island prides itself on its material possessions, because of the influence of the householder's brother in the United States who sends remittances, so it is said, and often visits Inis Beag for lengthy stays. I was asked to take photographs of this family, whose members posed before various pieces of modern furniture and appliances, to be sent to relatives—the only such [356] request ever made of me. There are a few families, however, which pride themselves [515] on the neatness and cleanliness of their houses and streets and the appearance [171] of their members, and they are apt to denigrate families which are slovenly. The [184] lack of emphasis on material possessions in Inis Beag presents a startling contrast to the situation which prevails in most of the Western world, including many peasant societies and the mainland Irish; equally contrasting is the apparent lack of opprobrium attached to doing relief work on the roads and receiving the dole.

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871 Although 28 islanders have received some secondary education during the past 15 years (excluding priests and nuns), only 2 have attended university—both of them before the Second World War at University College, Dublin. Two women and a man have become teachers, and the former have returned to Inis Beag to teach in the national school. Most of the advanced students today are preparing to teach or nurse or are gaining technical skills, and it is not expected by their parents that they will return to the island to live permanently. Families are boastful of their members with advanced education, and those families without such representation often urge their children to do better in the local school, and try to muster financial support for their high school education if scholarships are not forthcoming. I was told by a man disgusted with the lack of interest in school shown by his son, "The man who uses a pen is better off than the man who uses a
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793 spade or trammel net." Prestige also is gained through having a close relative become a nun or priest or achieve success in the business or professional world,
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16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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especially outside of Ireland. Four islanders have entered orders—two priests and two nuns—and have brought their families not only prestige but an aura of sanctity; it is believed by the folk that God bestows grace on his earthly representatives and on their kin as well. Even the king is thought to receive some measure of supernatural support for the period of time that he spent during his youth, as is rumored, as a servant at Maynooth Seminary.

The folk rank one another according to their ability to row the *curach*, fish, farm, knit, and perform other economic tasks, although such talents do not bring the prestige that they once did. I often have heard individuals chaffed publicly, sometimes even to their faces, for possessing less than average skills, and many persons have told me privately that they admire or envy the skills of others and wish that they themselves were more adept. A man who owns land in the quarter of another village told me that he works painstakingly in setting a garden there, since his efforts will be appraised by the alien villagers and pitilessly condemned if found wanting. Women gain most of their prestige through performing well the tasks ascribed to them by the division of labor. The economic skills of individuals who lived in the past are lauded more than those of contemporary islanders, reflecting the shift of emphasis in the prestige system; this is far more the case with singing, dancing, and storytelling, as well as with the display of strength and courage. Institutionalized storytelling had disappeared from Inis Beag before 1960, although raconteurs of note still hold forth in the pubs and at small social gatherings. These persons, and the several who excel at singing and dancing, are held in high repute. Probably the best liked of the islanders is a man of 72 years who is admired for his wit, charm, friendliness, and agile step dancing. When drinking in the pubs, he enjoys telling anecdotes about his past experiences, singing and dancing, expressing a simulated sadness at his bachelor estate, and poking sly fun at the behavior of certain folk. Although he is landless and thought to be overly lazy, he is ranked high in the prestige hierarchy because of his esthetic talents and occasional *joie de vivre*. His recluse brother of opposite temperament remarked sadly, "Even the stones of the island know him, but no one knows me." Another landless man, now deceased, who was about the same age, enjoyed high status because he was a traditional storyteller, was noted as a young man for his exceptional strength and athletic and rowing prowess, had spent a decade in the United States, and by reading had educated himself well above the level of most of the folk.

Stories abound concerning once famous men of strength and courageous deeds in Inis Beag and the surrounding region. These anecdotes are recounted more during the summer months than the winter ones, when tourists are within earshot and can be suitably impressed. Acts of courage performed by folk in the past mostly deal with mishaps which occurred to crews while fishing or traveling to and from nearby islands or the mainland. The feats of strength performed by former athletes—such as putting the shot, long jumping, and "throwing the half-hundred"—are well within the realm of possibility, but other feats usually are grossly exaggerated. Examples of the latter are the man who, grasping the base of the front leg of a chair in which sat a person weighing 11 stones (154 pounds), lifted it with one hand, also the man who raised over his head "with ease" a struggling opponent of 16 stones (224 pounds) in a pub fight.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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526 struggling opponent of 16 stones (224 pounds) in a pub fight. A famous writer
181 claimed that he introduced into Inis Beag a feat of agility that he had learned in
[171] France, which consists of holding a stick in both hands at the knees and jumping back and forth across it without losing grip; the islanders attest that this "trick" was known locally for at least a century, and one man boasted that his father was
123 able to leap back and forth a dozen times in quick succession. My rapport with the men was enhanced by the fact that I had been a weight thrower and lifter and used to entertain them by putting a granite boulder, throwing a discus that I had brought with me, and performing repetition presses with a barrel of stout. However, the one time that I was persuaded to compete for Inis Beag against Inis Thiar in putting the shot (a flat-bottomed store weight of 14 pounds), I fouled with my foot all three times and thus suffered ignominious defeat. The curate who officiated at the event appeared pleased, but the islanders who had placed wagers on me were of opposite disposition.